

Nebraska Department of Education
General Information on the 2007-2008 Statewide Writing Assessment
Proficiency Levels
August 2008

The proficiency level for the Statewide Writing Assessment represents the score needed to meet the Nebraska writing standards. This proficiency level for grades 4, 8, and 11, sometimes known as the cut score, insures that students who score at or above this level clearly demonstrate they have met the Nebraska writing standards measured by the Statewide Writing Assessment.

The proficiency level for each grade was recommended by a panel of experienced educators who, through their professional and analytical judgment, determined the minimum proficient performance based on their examination of actual student writing assessment samples.

The following is a brief description of the participants and the process of determining the proficiency level for the 2008 Statewide Writing Assessment for grades 4, 8, and 11.

Participants

- The panels consisted of a total of 43 educators familiar with student writing, with 16 at 4th grade, 13 at 8th grade, and 14 at 11th grade.
- Panelists represented school districts of varying sizes and locations from across the state

Process

1. Each panel of educators received a brief overview of the:
 - state writing standards
 - writing prompt to which students were asked to respond
 - definitions of Beginning, Proficient, and Advanced student writing
 - common traits found in writing (ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions)
 - holistic scoring process
2. Panelists, through their analytical judgment, determined student performance in each of the Beginning, Proficient, and Advanced categories.
3. Each panelist read 50 student papers representing all points on the scoring scale and which had been scored at the state scoring site. The scores for each of these papers were masked.
4. Working independently, each panelist classified each paper into one of the three proficiency categories (Beginning, Proficient, Advanced).
5. Next, each panelist independently identified the three weakest Proficient papers (minimum level of proficiency) and the three strongest Beginning papers (not meeting the proficiency level). Those papers, in the judgment of each panelist, identified the performance level of the barely proficient student on the assessment.
6. When the classification and identification process was complete, the papers were collected from each panelist and the score data were then unmasked and computed to produce a range for the recommended minimum proficiency level.
7. At the conclusion of this standard setting process, the recommended minimum proficiency range of scores for each grade level was presented to the Nebraska Department of Education for final approval.